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ADDRESS BY
↓ GENERAL CURTIS E. LeMAY
CHIEF OF STAFF, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
COMMENCEMENT DAY EXERCISES
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLUMBUS, OHIO
FRIDAY -- 8 JUNE 1962

President Fawcett, Distinguished Guests, Members of the Faculty, Members of the Class of 1962, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I want to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to you, President Fawcett -- and to the trustees of the University -- for the honor you have conferred on me. Your invitation to participate in these Commencement Exercises is a privilege which I value highly.

Graduation from a great university such as Ohio State is a significant occasion. It is a most important event in the lives of those who are receiving their diplomas. It is not only a high point in the record of accomplishment for the graduating class, but for the faculty and staff as well. Certainly, it is a proud day for the families and friends of the graduates. I am sure all agree that your commencement represents a source of new hope, vigor and ideas for our country, and I congratulate you on the successful completion of this milestone in your life.

In searching for a subject for today's program I suppose I went through the same process as many other commencement speakers. I sought advice from some of my colleagues and staffs in the Pentagon. During this process I learned that not one of

the people I talked to either remembered the speaker at their commencement, or the subject about which he talked. It became clear to me that if this was the general situation I had better make my remarks short, and I would be doing well indeed if I were able to get one basic thought across. And if this basic thought was not going to stick with the audience very long it should be one that must for a short time be of some help in guiding a new graduate in his first steps outside the academic halls. So the thought I have chosen is -- Opportunity. This is what each one of you inherits along with the diploma you receive today. The United States has always been regarded as the land of opportunity, and it has been, but we always seem to have a few people around who lack confidence in our future and say the good old days are gone forever.

When I graduated some thirty years ago, I remember the dismal picture painted by some of the prophets of the time. Perhaps things could have been better. We were at the height -- or maybe depths is a better word -- of the Great Depression. It seem to me, however, that some of our doomsday prophets went beyond the economic ills of the country. They insisted that private enterprise had completely failed and that we must turn to socialism or even communism to insure our continued growth and security. While the economic segment of our society was most frequently attacked, other elements were not neglected. Our cultural, moral and spiritual concepts came under fire. In fact the very foundations of our traditional beliefs were questioned.

In spite of this pessimistic outlook, our country fought its way out of the depression and on to new and greater heights that has achieved us the highest standard of living in the world. Today we have a gross national product of over 500 billion dollars and I have heard predictions as high as 800 billion for 1970. We have accomplished this without sacrificing the concepts upon which this country was founded, without the loss of freedom and dignity of the individual, or of our

nation. During this growth period we have found the leadership of the free world thrust upon us along with the responsibility that goes with that leadership. Our nation now seems destined to provide a large portion of the military strength for free world security and in addition provide help for the underdeveloped countries of the world.

I suppose every generation has its false prophets. There certainly have been many around during my lifetime. I recognize that each generation has its problems and challenges, but without problems and challenges life would be a boring existence. Perhaps it is true that present problems are even more complex and frustrating than those we faced before.

Culturally -- whole continents are rising in a revolution such as the world has never seen. Masses of peoples are seeking freedom, a better life and their rightful human dignity.

Economically -- we are experiencing very aggressive competition in our foreign and domestic markets -- most of it from countries we helped to rebuilt after World War II.

Politically -- we live in a world divided into two ideologies that apparently cannot live together. This has produced a military threat to our security that is entirely unique in our history and has forced us into maintaining large military forces.

It is in the fields of science and technology however that the greatest explosion of problems is occurring. We are in the midst of an age of technological change that will make the industrial revolution seem dull indeed. The problems associated with technological changes are producing opportunities in greater abundance than ever before. Opportunity is not only knocking at the door, it is beating gongs all around the house.

The future has never been brighter for college graduates. But fear of the bomb, defeatism and lack of individual drive will cloud any picture.

Your diploma is more than a work permit, it is a certificate of achievement, a notice to the world that you have the necessary energy, drive and ambition to see a job through.

As you leave this great institution are you going to be a follower or are you prepared to be a leader? For the sake of our nation I urge you to lead and to reach past all old frontiers and far out to the new horizons that are expected of us by the free world.

The graduate of my day who listened to the predictions of gloom missed the trend of our times. He missed opportunities to exert an influence on his generation and the world around him.

But the farsighted saw the trends of history. They realized the opportunities. For the farsighted, opportunities exist even in the bleakest times.

Today's opportunities, today's problems, today's challenges and rewards are greater than ever before.

You are better equipped than any previous generation to deal with the new dimensions of our age. You can't follow the paths carved by your elders and expect to rise individually or as a nation. This is a changing world and dragging your feet will drag you to oblivion -- and slavery.

Our problems are admittedly many and underlined by increasing competition in science and technology from other countries of the world. As the world population increases and new nations emerge on the scene of history, there also will be increased competition in political, social, and economic areas. And our responsibility as a nation increases proportionately.

We are on the threshold of another revolutionary age. The space age is opening before us. Political upheaval threatens much of the world. Society is adopting

new values. The cultures of the world are changing under the influence of new technologies, new industrial potential, new problems in military security, and new demands for a better life.

Just look back ten years. Who would have thought that our aircraft would be able to go straight up faster than we could go straight down a short decade ago? Who would have thought that polio would be all but eliminated in the United States today? Who would have believed that we would be sending men into space to orbit the earth?

Much of the progress we make is due to specialists who devote their lifetime to becoming expert in one subject. We have to have specialists in our complicated world. But in the age before us we must have people who can understand and integrate a broad range of specialties, can lead us to further greatness.

This is your challenge -- your responsibility -- to grow with a changing world to provide your nation and all free people with the dynamic leadership to maintain world peace, insure opportunities for all, and preserve the dignity of man.

As you leave here today I sincerely hope you recognize and accept these facts of life.

So, set your goal, whatever it may be, and go after it.

If it is wealth you want, it's available. According to a recent study by Professor Lampman of the University of Wisconsin we have produced over 9000 new millionaires a year for the past eight years.

If it is medicine you pursue, I'm told we are on the verge of tremendous breakthroughs in mental health and the cure of cancer and heart disease. Join in this battle and help remove some of the remaining scourges of mankind.

If it is government service you select, you have available the many traditional fields as well as the new avenues of responsibility required to administer the aid and assistance we are freely offering the newly emerging countries throughout the world. The opportunities in government service are unlimited.

In science and technology, there is no ceiling. We are going out into space. This will be man's greatest adventures -- not only for the men who crew the ships and make the journey, but for the people on the ground who support the effort.

Whatever your chosen field may be, approach it with your eye beyond the frontiers because regardless of your occupation there is adventure and excitement in the search for the unknown.

As I see it, this, in summary is our situation:

Your generation faces serious, but not insoluble problems. The free world faces a grave threat. In rapid fire fashion, new discoveries and developments are being made almost daily that prevent us from relaxing our vigilance. Our future is directly dependent on having an educated and informed people who are in tune with the world tempo and alert to the myriad of applications and possibilities of new developments in all fields of human endeavor.

Time is not on our side. In the twenty years since World War II, the tempo has accelerated. To move in this age we must have people who are alert, imaginative and quick to grasp and utilize new discoveries and adapt to new concepts.

World leadership in the future will demand more of us, will be directly dependent upon intellectual leadership and awareness, focussed on a common goal by the cooperation and teamwork of free peoples.

You have proven your capability and willingness to work towards your goal. You have the intellectual foundation and the basic motivation required of tomorrow's leaders.

To be in the vanguard of intellectual leadership and awareness that our nation needs for security and a continuation of our way of life you, the individual, must also provide the other ingredients of imagination, courage, vision and daring.

In closing, I want to again thank Ohio State University for the honor bestowed upon me and for the privilege of addressing this great audience. Remembering that many of my colleagues in the Pentagon had forgotten who delivered their commencement address and the subject of that address, I will ask the members of the Class of '62 to carry one thought into the future. Your diploma is more than a work permit; it is a key to your future and to the future of our nation. It is a key that will assist in opening many doors of existing opportunity. Value this well-earned key and use it to make a better world -- a free world.

To each of you I extend my congratulations and my best wishes for outstanding success.

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